

What Sequestration Really Means



Half of Sequestration Triggers Will Fall Directly on Defense

While some have questioned the precise distribution of the first round of cuts to security spending, no such uncertainty exists in the sequestration phase of the [Budget Control Act \(BCA\)](#). On page 18 of the bill, the BCA allocates “half of the total reduction calculated” under the bill, which is \$492 billion over 10 years, “to discretionary appropriations and direct spending accounts within function 050” under sequestration. Over 95 percent of the budget authority under budget function 050 is for the Department of Defense. The remainder includes the nuclear weapons programs managed by the Department of Energy. In describing the implementation of sequestration, the BCA uses the term “revised security category,” which some have suggested might include Homeland Security, international affairs, and other spending. But the BCA specifically defines the “revised security category” under sequestration on page 17 as “discretionary appropriations in budget function 050.”

Defense Cuts Will Not Wait Until 2013

The Defense Department operates off long term plans and budgets, making important and irrevocable decisions years before they are implemented. In order to meet the timeline of the BCA and make the required cuts to comply with spending caps, the DOD will begin cuts immediately. The DOD will have to frontload many of the cuts because of high short term costs such as separation payments and penalties for cancelling contracts. Even if the Congress were to amend the sequestration triggers in the next year, some decisions would be irrevocable. A shipyard closed because of program cancellations will not be there when we are ready to buy ships again. With the most combat training of any force in our history, we will permanently lose invaluable experience with tens of thousands of troops receiving pink slips in 2012.

Sequestration Will Drastically Shrink the Military and Harm National Security

Secretary Panetta calculated that sequestration represents a reduction of nearly 20 percent in DOD funding over the next ten years. According to [Secretary Panetta's November 14 letter to Senators McCain and Graham](#), reductions at this level would mean:

- The smallest ground force since before World War II
- The smallest Navy since before World War I
- The smallest tactical fighter force in the history of the Air Force
- The smallest civilian workforce in the history of the Defense Department

Panetta continued in that [letter](#) to warn that sequestration would effectively eradicate an entire generation of military modernization, potentially including:

- Termination of the Joint Strike Fighter and next generation bomber
- Delay of the next generation ballistic missile submarine and cuts to our existing sub fleet
- Cancellation of the littoral combat ship
- Elimination of all modernization of ground combat vehicles and Army helicopters

Despite over 350 base closings in five rounds of BRAC, sequestration could lead to another round of closures.

Reductions under sequestration would put our military and national security at risk. [Secretary Panetta's own analysis](#) affirms sequestration would:

- Undermine our ability to meet our national security objectives
- Generate significant operational risks and delay response time to crises, conflicts, and disasters
- Severely limit our ability to be forward deployed
- Severely reduce force training and threaten overall operational readiness